

# Issues Concerning Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership<sup>\*</sup>

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Among major countries' relationship, the bond between China and Russia is one of importance around the globe. Each step of its development attracts worldwide attention and produces important impact on global and regional orders. Meanwhile, both China and Russia not only put priority on the bilateral relations in diplomacy, but also regard each other as a crucial partner of collaboration.

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the development of Sino-Russian relations has proceeded quite smoothly. Particularly, the establishment of "strategic cooperative partnership" in 1996 demonstrates the governments of both countries acted with a view of long-term development and set out to design and build closer ties of all-round cooperation. Thanks to efforts made in the following decades and more, China and Russia have built institutional frameworks of cooperation in various fields and at various levels. All the while, bilateral relations have grown increasingly more stable and mature and have been continuously improved upon, embarking on a path of sound development.

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I. TWO FOCAL POINTS OF PRAGMATIC COOPERATION  
BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA

Since the beginning of the 21st century, China and Russia have enhanced their pragmatic cooperation and improved the quality of the cooperation, reaping great achievements in various fields, which can be witnessed in the following aspects: A number of legal documents have been formulated to lay a solid legal foundation for the bilateral relations; the political mutual trust has been further strengthened; both sides have regarded “the continual development of strategic partnership of cooperation” as a long-term goal and the priority of foreign policy; both sides have lent firm support to each other on crucial issues concerning sovereignty and territory; substantial achievements have been obtained in pragmatic cooperation; people-to-people exchanges have increasingly expanded and local cooperation prospered; personnel exchanges have become closer and the mutual understanding between the two peoples has grown deeper; and international cooperation between the two sides has grown the ever closer. In other words, Sino-Russian cooperation covers, without any “blind spot”, all areas of their bilateral relationship. The “high level” and “high standard” in Sino-Russian cooperation repeatedly emphasized by the leaders of both countries are definitely not rhetoric for publicity.

“Pragmatic cooperation” is the most frequently used term in Sino-Russian relations. The core of it is that cooperation in each field does not simply consist of formalities or gestures, but actual interactions that can produce real gains that are beneficial for the social and economic development of both sides. This facet has become an important consensus in long-term sound and stable

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development of the Sino-Russian partnership of comprehensive strategic cooperation. In the mean time, it also corresponds to the current situation of bilateral relations, which sets the following issues as fundamental tasks: put previously reached agreements and statements in effect, fully exploit the great potentials of cooperation and transform the good will of systematically deepening pragmatic cooperation into practice, while promoting strategic cooperation to a new level in accordance with the advance and the substantial returns of mutual beneficial cooperation. Recently, there are two focal points in Sino-Russian pragmatic cooperation, namely, further consolidating the material (economic cooperation) and cultural (mutual understanding and trust) bases.

Economic cooperation is a crucial area in Sino-Russian strategic partnership and also a strategically significant support for bilateral relations. The resource endowments and geographic conditions of China and Russia implicitly suggest that there are great complementarities and strength in regional cooperation that holds immense potentials.

**Table 1. A Survey of Sino-Russian Trade**

(Unit: Billion Dollars)

Year	Imports and Exports	Exports	Imports	Growth Compared with Previous Year (%)			Balance of Imports and Exports
				Imports and Exports	Exports	Imports	
2000	8.0	2.23	5.77	39.9	49.2	36.6	-3.54
2001	10.67	2.71	7.96	33.4	21.4	37.9	-5.25
2002	11.93	3.52	8.41	11.8	29.9	5.6	-4.89
2003	15.76	6.03	9.73	32.1	71.4	15.7	-3.70
2004	21.23	9.1	12.13	34.7	51	24.7	-3.03
2005	29.1	13.21	15.89	37.1	45.2	31	-2.68
2006	33.39	15.83	17.55	14.7	19.8	10.5	-1.72
2007	48.17	28.49	19.68	44.3	79.9	12.1	8.81
2008	56.83	33.01	23.82	18.0	15.9	21.0	9.19
2009	38.80	17.51	21.28	-31.8	-47.1	-10.7	-3.77
2010	55.45	29.61	25.84	43.1	69	21.7	3.77

2011	79.25	38.90	40.35	42.7	31.4	55.6	-1.44
2012	88.16	44.06	44.10	11.2	13.2	9.9	-0.04
2013	89.21	49.59	39.61	1.2	12.6	-10.2	9.978

Sources: Website of China Customs, <http://www.chinacustomsstat.com>.

Judging by data in the table above, Sino-Russian economic cooperation has moved onto fast track since 2000, witnessing a double-digit growth for years in a run. Beyond dispute, China remains the largest trading partner of Russia and in turn Russia, for many years, has also one of China's top 10 trading partners. As a matter of fact, economic cooperation has become the most lively arena in Sino-Russian pragmatic cooperation, which, to a great extent, meliorated the situation of so-called "warm in politics and cool in economy".

Energy cooperation has long remained a major component in Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation. In September of 2010, the construction of the oil pipeline connecting the two countries was finally completed in September 2010 and began to deliver crude oil towards China in 2011. In Sino-Russian relations, 2013 is "the year of breakthrough" in energy cooperation. In many fields, such as oil, natural gas, coal, electric power, nuclear power and hydropower, a number of agreements of intension were reached between the two sides, together with the solution of some perennial problems correspondingly.

In the light of agreements already reached, Russia shall steadily increase the amount of oil exported to China in the next 25 years and the annual supplies will be raised from the current 15 million tons to 45 million tons. The year of 2013 witnessed a drastic breakthrough in Sino-Russian natural gas cooperation and the reaching of a framework agreement involving a series of issues, such as the pricing mechanism, aggregate supply and payment, which established the legal groundwork for the gas supply program.

In addition to deals of raw materials, the two parties have extended their concerns further to such areas as oil-gas extraction and processing in addition to starting discussions on plans of cooperation in downstream production and sales. They have also worked closely in areas such as electric, coal and nuclear power.

The coordinated development of adjacent regions along the borderlines was considered a new area of collaboration and the related planning outline has been laid down on the official level. Preliminary discussions were held to probe the potentials of hundreds of programs, such as joined mineral development, intensive timber processing enterprises, cooperation in building materials and agriculture as well as China's participation in Russian special economic zones (SEZs) development. In the mean time, Sino-Russian regional cooperation began to extend to inland provinces. In May 2013, promoted by the central governments of the two countries, a cooperation protocol between China's middle reaches of the Yangtze River and Russian Volga region was signed and both parties set out to draw up development programs and specific plans of cooperation.

In 2013, China put forward the proposal of developing a "Silk Road Economic Belt", which gives expression to its new idea in opening up to the outside world and inter-regional cooperation. A flexible and pragmatic program of cooperation with concrete projects as the nodal points, it provides a new platform for developing cooperation in communications, telecom, power grids and energy with Russia as well as other central Asian states.

To give Sino-Russian economic cooperation an extra push, the two countries have set very clear and specific goals for trade between the two countries, i.e., to increase the trade value to US\$100 billion by 2015 and US\$200 billion by 2020. However, there are difficulties to ensure the attainment of such goals, particularly with regard to the goal set for the second stage, that is, to double the 2015 figure in five years.

For quite a long time, general trade in goods remained the dominant component of Sino-Russian economic cooperation, which, to a large extent, relied on the trade of energy and raw materials. After 2008 global financial crisis, as the prices of resource products were unlikely to return to the formerly high levels, there was little chance that the factors that price hikes of a certain kind(s) of goods caused a rapid growth in total trade volume emerge again. Sino-Russian trade was basically built on industries utilizing distinct resource endowments and dominated by low value-added goods,

thus resulting in a minor share of finely processed, high-tech and high value-added products in their trade. In short, the problematic trade structure between the two countries lingered on and still has not yet been properly improved. But as demonstrated by experience in global economic development, it is almost impossible to establish close and stable economic ties between any two nations or upgrade the quality of their economic cooperation simply by relying on trade in general goods. Therefore, it is an important topic for both China and Russia how to expand cooperation in other economic fields, such as science and technology, investment, finance, service and labor, while making further efforts to development trade in general goods.

Besides, the mutual understanding and exchanges between the two peoples will have a direct impact on the trend of development of Sino-Russian relations; the level of their bilateral tie also depends on the depth and breadth of cooperation in the cultural field, which is conducive to dispel mutual misconception and vague perception. Therefore, the expansion of cultural exchanges as of late has become a new priority in Sino-Russian cooperation and was regarded an essential project for cementing the social foundation of friendly relations between the two countries. Certain satisfactory achievements have been witnessed in people-to-people contacts between China and Russia thanks to the consecutive sessions of the “Year of State,” “Year of Language” and “Year of Tourism”. Judging by the results of opinion polls, improvements have been seen in the mutual understanding between the two peoples and positive impression about each other.

Meanwhile, it must be acknowledged that it is no easy jog to enhance mutual understanding and mutual trust and lay a more solid social foundation for long-term friendship and it is inadvisable to expect a thorough solution to this problem just by holding a number of major events. On the contrary, what is required is sustained and meticulous work. It is still a daunting task to build mutual trust—not simply among top leaders, but among all social sectors of the two countries. In new conditions, it is obvious that general introduction and traditional ways of publicity cannot produce ideal impact. How to make cultural exchanges and cooperation get response from, arouse the interests and produce

effects among the two peoples is a problem in need of solution from the governments, academia, media, cultural institutions and social groups of the two countries.

## II. ISSUES ON SINO-RUSSIAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Sino-Russian cooperation has not been limited to the pure bilateral dimension. Rather, the two nations have treated the value of cooperative ties in a broader sense and made coordination an essential part of their own diplomatic strategy and resources that they can utilize. Moreover, such cooperation has also been viewed as an important means to promote global balance of power and democratization of international relations.

China and Russia share common positions on a wide range of international issues. Joint declarations on promoting multi-polarity, opposing hegemonism and special international issues were either announced in annual summit meetings or on other occasions, which not only highlighted the two countries' political consensus and sense of responsibility in establishing a new international order, but also provided the specific path to resolve such international problems.<sup>1</sup>

For years, China and Russia made use of both bilateral and multilateral platforms to coordinate positions and enhance cooperation on such principles in international relations as opposing interference in internal affairs, opposing use of force at will and safeguarding the UN collective negotiation mechanism; such major international issues as reforming international economic order, strengthening the influence of emerging market countries and preserving strategic stability; and such regional hot-spot issues as the handling of the Iranian and North Korean nuclear crises as well as the affairs of the Middle East. All this is not only consistent with growing diversity and democratization in international relations, but also to the benefit of accommodation and mutual learning among civilizations and governance models.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a major platform for China and Russia to work closely with related states in Central Asia, has promoted cooperation in all areas, which could not be materialized without Sino-Russian coordination and concerted



efforts. In this way, Sino-Russian cooperation and the development of the SCO reinforced each other.

Asia-Pacific region is the fastest developing geopolitical area to which the world economic and political center of gravity is shifting. In view of the complicated historical background, the overlapping various interests as well as overt and covert local conflicts, China and Russia desired cooperation in the formation of rules formation, maintenance of regional stability and the building of open and universal security.

With the increase of their involvement in international economic activities, promoting the reform of international economic order as well as enhancing the voice and influence of emerging economies has become the new frontier of Sino-Russian strategic coordination.

At the same time, three characteristics of Sino-Russian cooperation should not be ignored.

Firstly, either in theory or in practice, Sino-Russian cooperation does not target any third party. Though sometimes contradictory to the positions of the US and other Western countries, China and Russia do not intend to be the “opposition” simply for the sake of opposition. The Sino-Russian strategic partnership is by no means the reminiscence of the “Zero-Sum Game” politics between the two blocs during the Cold War, in another words, no logic of “we shall support whatever our enemies are against” any more. In fact, in both bilateral and multilateral terms, China and Russia have kept active and constructive interactions with the US and other Western countries on various areas, such as, non-traditional security challenges, anti-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting the stable growth of global economy.

Secondly, the bilateral cooperation is not restricted by hard rules, but based on equal consultation. The two countries normally decide the meeting point and extension of cooperation in line with their respective interests and overall strategy, and it is impossible for them to see eye to eye in each and every issue. For instance, China took its own stand when Russia granted diplomatic recognition to the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008, and did the same in the Ukraine crisis of 2014. It sounds more absurd when it was rumored that China and Russia had coordinated



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and confronted the territorial issues involving Japan together.

Thirdly, the cooperative relations cannot either remove or greatly relieve the outside pressures borne by them respectively, and their disputed areas with major Western countries are not completely overlapped. China would not assist Russia's contention with the West in the field of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Likewise, Russia would not help reduce the US and Japan's vigilance against China. Even in Central Asia where China and Russia exert significant influence, it is hardly possible to exclude the entry of

outside powers like the situation of Eastern Europe in Cold War.

In summary, Sino-Russian cooperation is built on a foundation that both parties have common or similar interests and shared values. The nature of this partnership is more initiatory and constructive rather than confrontational. To be more specific, it functions as a restraint on hegemonism and power politics and provides another approach in building the future world and resolving problems, while offering more space for emerging countries in international politics and economic affairs.

Just take an example of "the responsibility to protect," an idea frequently referred to by Western countries. China and Russia do not essentially deny the importance of protecting human rights. But, like many developing countries, they are also anxious that this idea would be turned into a convenient device that could facilitate the strong's selective interventions and excessive use of force with the weak as targets. Such a concern was corroborated by the Libya crisis of 2012, when the Western allies' action went beyond the UN Security Council's authorization. It is out of this consideration that when it next came to the Syrian crisis, China and Russia fully insisted on the standing of political solutions in the Security Council and were not willing to offer another chance

for a Western intervention by force. In September 2013, the relative parties reached an agreement on Syria abandoning chemical weapons. Later, various Syrian factions opened talks in Geneva. Although efforts thus made did not completely put out the fire of Syria's internal disorder, it proved nonetheless that diplomatic negotiations and political approach remain the optimal solution of priority. It is reconfirmed similarly in the new turnabout on Iranian nuclear talks.

However, there is a problem that cannot be put aside when Sino-Russian cooperation is under review, that is, the two countries' rivalry in some regional affairs. For a long period of time, the two governments tried to evade and even disavow this problem for the sake of bilateral relations. But it does not infer that there are no controversies at all.

There is no denying that some sort of rivalry is bound to arise between China and Russia, with China's interest and influence in other CIS member states and the whole Central Asia increasing remarkably, and Russian strategy of engaging in promoting regional integration and building Eurasian Union. Likewise, Russia's cooperation, particularly in military relations, with those countries that have historic disputes with China also implicitly complicates the situation for China.

Generally speaking, when the interests of two major countries expand, a kind of "rivalry" is something that would surely follow. It is, however, by no means deliberately manufactured or the original strategic intent of China and Russia. Moreover, with the active exchanges of top leaders and the existing political mutual trust that has already reached a certain altitude, these problems did not actually turn into any serious obstacles in Sino-Russian relations. Nevertheless, in view of the long-term development, some mechanisms of positive interaction — win-win, accommodative and non-exclusive — should be built and advanced. In this way, both sides can prevent the primitive and potential rivalry from becoming undesirable competition that may damage their political mutual trust.

### III. THE CRITICISM OF “SINO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE” THEORY

From the start of Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership, there have been consistent sayings like “China and Russia would form some kind of alliance to rival the West”. I wrote an article “The Untenable Theory of Sino-Russian Alliance” to comprehensively illuminate the fallacy of such views. Based on my observation of recent Russian policies and exchanges with Russian individuals, I have every reason to conclude that it is infeasible for China and Russia to be “allies.” The key lies in the following fact: Since 2009, great changes have happened in both the external environment for and problems faced by China and Russia, respectively, and naturally the two countries have had different strategic visions.

China’s rapid development and the US pivot to Asia were the greatest changes in international relations and geopolitics after the 2008 financial crisis, which did not actually bring about the “strategic buffer period” expected by some Russians, nor produce more pressure on Moscow either. “Opportunity” may be the most important word one can get through reading Russian foreign policy concepts of 2008 and 2013. There are two essential judgments in those two official documents. First, financial crisis is a signal that announces the serious weakening of the Western hegemony in two decades after the Cold War, and the ascendancy of multi-polarization in international structure, which offers Russia an opportunity to reintegrate the post-Soviet regions by the Eurasian Union. Second, the Asia-Pacific area as the new global strategic focus also provides Russia a chance to make diplomatic maneuvers.

A new security framework for Europe is still in making. It might be safe to say that the eastward “new frontier” advanced by NATO and EU will not stop at Central and Eastern Europe. In the next decade or more, except the three Baltic states, the western part of former Soviet Union (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan) will remain the “grey area” contended by Russia and the West. In spite of that, neither Russia nor the West has the capability and the will to shape a regional structure that is absolutely beneficial to one side by extreme measures or antagonistic posture. The rivalry will be conducted mainly through “soft power” like politics, diplomacy, economics and ideology.

Different from the all-out confrontation in the Cold War that was featured by political war of words, economic exclusion, cultural insulation and military containment, Russian-US relationship today is fundamentally similar to others among major countries, within which cooperation coexists with conflict. No matter how complicated their conflict is and how little their mutual trust is left over, there has been no life-and-death struggle at the present time in Russian-US relations and nearly no possibility of a military clash, let alone a large scale war.<sup>2</sup> In turn, according to the priority of US diplomacy, Russia has hitherto lost much significance and only been treated as a “trouble maker”, rather than a challenger of American hegemony.<sup>3</sup>

It is exactly because of this that many Russians found the relations among China, Russia and the US seemingly a knock-off of the “Great Triangle” in the 1970-80s, only with the Soviet Union being replaced by China. It may be impossible for Russia to ally with the Americans like China did in the past, but Russia today is endowed with a kind of potential that could give her a more positive role with a special effect.

The European power structure in our day is somewhat static and lack of room for maneuver. In contrast, Russia in the Asia-Pacific region enjoys a status with more flexibility, detachedness and available resources. Indeed, little has so far been invested by Russia in this region, but there are also no serious quarrels and no irreconcilable conflicts that bother her. In fact, by working piecemeal and reshaping traditional partnership, Russia has built for herself a favorable position both on the Asian continent and in the Western Pacific area. Russia remains the dominator of central Asia, maintains traditional bonds with Mongolia and has deepened comprehensive cooperation with China. In addition, she has succeeded in establishing regional pillar in areas ranging from Southeastern to Northeastern Asia by exploiting her ties with India, Vietnam and the Korean peninsula countries. Under such circumstances, why would Russia abandon such a flexible and favorable geopolitical standing for “taking sides” and establish a new alliance with others? Besides, it becomes even more impossible when the countries with which China has disputes of

increasing acuity are at the same time Russia's important strategic partners.<sup>4</sup>

Someone might calculate that a Sino-Russian alliance (or a very close relationship resembling a true alliance) could be only targeting the US hegemony, and they may not reach agreement on every topic. However, if China would not be restrained by others in the path towards building a new model of relationship between major countries, how could Beijing make any demands on the dealings between Moscow and Washington?

Actually, Russian 2013 foreign policy concept included a very clear definition of Russia's position and it told a lot: Russian diplomacy would play a unique role of "balancing" in international affairs.<sup>5</sup> According to Russian's interpretations, it suggested an active practice of "flexible, non-alignment diplomacy of network."<sup>6</sup> Apparently, Russia endeavors to secure for herself the most favorable position and interests in the Asia-Pacific region as well as globally by way of network diplomacy that comprises of both key points and complex, parallel relationships.<sup>7</sup>

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It is worth noting that those arguing for "Sino-Russian Alliance" would doubtless expect Russia to grant full support on issues that concerns Chinese interests, such as that in the disputes in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. Once illusions collapsed, it is highly likely that they would backlash and turn to the opposite extreme. Similarly, they might also expect that Russian-US relations remain strained — only in this way could their logic of Sino-Russian alliance work. But in case that the Kremlin manages to improve her relationship with the White House, it would equally constitute an outrage that could stir up a kind of mistrust of Russia.

#### IV. THE CRITICISM OF “CHINA THREAT THEORY”

Contrary to the “Sino-Russian Alliance Theory”, the “China threat” is another idea that at times lingers in some Russian minds. Even when the two countries’ cooperation deepened and international situation changed, words about “China threat” only lessened, not completely disappeared.

Traditional Russian version of “China Threat Theory” was rooted in fundamental security concerns, consisting of three correlated parts, that is, “territorial claim,” “immigration growth” and “economic invasion.” In the context of China’s development and the increase of her overseas interests, a new factor was added to Russian misgivings of China due to “uncertainties.” Above all, there are a series of questions facing Russia: how much impact would China’s rise bring to the global and regional situation and of what nature would it be? Would it lead to region-wide or worldwide armed conflicts, particularly when it is involved with issues such as China’s unification and territorial-maritime disputes that related to other global or regional powers? What those potential conflicts or disputes would mean to the interests of Russia? Then, it is a plain fact that China’s growing influence in the CIS zone — especially in the central Asia — and her ever closer cooperation with those countries in fields like trade and energy is not completely in conformity with Russia’s long-term interests in the region. Additionally, in China’s patriotism education, it is hard to avoid that some historical issues between China and Russia would generate reflections, and whether the reflections mean good or bad for Sino-Russian relations has yet unknown. A report issued by Russian Foreign Ministry in May 2010 emphasized that “special attention should paid to the enhancing role of China in international affairs and the influence on Russia’s global and regional interest from China’s increasingly active operations on world stage”.<sup>8</sup>

It should be acknowledged that the fast rising of China as a major country in a unique developmental approach may inevitably cause concerns and uneasiness of other countries, including Russia. That is just like a natural truth. But compared with other countries, the case of Russia has two distinguishing features. First, China and Russia are neighbors with large differences in almost every field — politics,



economy, culture, etc. — and yet share a very long border line. The adjacent geographic locations and the troublesome historical issues make Russia also anxious about fundamental territorial security in its Far East region. Second, China's rapid growth coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Russia's long-term crisis. The great disparity in the position of national strength between the two countries changed enormously and imperceptibly within a span of a hundred years. Now China has become a major country like Russia with a rough equilibrium, and even kept some better indicators regarding the overall national strength.

Therefore, in spite of something deliberately fabricated, Russia's qualm about China is bound up more with the mindset "automatically" generated by the change of comparative national strength between the two neighbors during the recent decade. At the same time, to a certain extent, it can be attributed to the uncertainties about future.

Based on the records of the last 20 years, Russia's misgivings about China by and large did not hinder the development of Sino-Russian relations and comprehensive cooperation, no did disrupt the overall climate of the strategic coordination partnership of two countries. If one deems the coexistence and alteration of cooperation and conflict are what makes up the subject of China's relations with other major countries, the theme of Sino-Russian relations has always been cooperation. Russia's worry and vigilance has not changed her basic China policy and has simply remained in thoughts and the press speculation. Russia shows strong will to work together with China and acts vigorously. With continuous advance of bilateral cooperation, some anxiety and qualm has been dispelled gradually. Just look at some examples: the territorial boundary has been defined and marked, the reciprocal disarmament in the border regions has been accomplished, the security trust mechanisms have been established, and the legal documents regulating the bilateral relations have been released. Those documents explicitly stipulated that neither shall covet the other's territory. Russian scholars held that a basic mutual trust has been built up between the two countries and the so-called fear of security threats has been largely reduced through political means.<sup>9</sup> For



instance, the Chinese immigration issue was hyped at one time but at last proved by Russian statistical data and related investigations to be merely an illusion.

If the sources of Russia's misgivings are identified, there is no room for fuss or fury and no need for exaggeration and uproar. It should be noted that the peculiar geopolitical setting makes it easy that both sides consciously or unconsciously tend to regard the other one as a potential rival and hereby keep a sharp lookout. China's development has always been accompanied by others' suspicions and so it will be in the future, even in the case of Russia. The qualm of Russia about China will last for a long time and coexist with the course of Sino-Russian cooperation, for which we should have psychological preparation and stay calm. What we are capable of doing is to relieve the apprehension and make it nontoxic to the bilateral collaboration and relationship. In the best scenario, the impact of "worry" could be lessened progressively and its influence on policy might be reduced.

After 20 years work, Sino-Russian relationship has been kept stable and to a certain extent accepted and acknowledged by the two societies with a solid foundation. From the angle of either the insurance of fundamental security and stability, or the creation of a more just international and regional order, the strategic need and the interdependence of the two nations has not changed. And that makes Sino-Russian strategic collaboration stable and persistent.

China and Russia are facing different environments and challenges, disparate extent and nature of their conflicts with the West, and divergent probability of crisis. Lately, a kind of disequilibrium comes up in the Sino-Russian interdependence, even though it is not a completely new phenomenon. Specifically speaking, China's need for and reliance on Russia have grown so much that Russia's support or assistance is becoming very critical, if it is not absolutely necessary. That is obvious not only in diplomacy, but also can be observed in other aspects like bilateral cooperation on energy and military industry. It is also implied in China's standings on some disputes with others. Why dose appear such a phenomenon? How to handle it? Is it in line with China's interests in the long run? How does China realize her overall diplomatic strategy and obtain the

room of flexibility while rise as an independent and responsible major country? All the questions deserve to be noted and thought deeply from the overall view of grand diplomacy.

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1 These joint declarations includes “The Joint Declaration of China and Russia about Multi-polarization and Establishing International New Order” in April 1997, “The Joint Declaration of China and Russia about Twenty-First Century International Order” in July 2005, “Joint Declaration on Major International Issues” in May 2008 and “Joint Declaration on Current International Situation and Major International Issues” in June 2011.

2 In the external challenges proposed by Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2013, there were no mentions of traditional security issues like foreign invasions and armed conflicts. External challenges that were indeed referred to include: global economic crisis, Western interference of other states’ internal affairs, the weakening of the UN, cross-border threats and the tendency to reemphasize ideology.

3 Coincidentally, in a series of foreign policy papers issued recently by Russia, the ranking of the US in Russian diplomatic agenda was also brought down. Therefore, it shows from a different perspective that, when the US significance in Russian development and security remains unchanged, it is nonetheless not the factor of “vital importance” or the first priority.

4 Russia and India formed strategic partnership. In 2013, Russia declared that she would upgrade her relationship with Vietnam to the standard of “comprehensive strategic partnership”.

5 Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F), March 20, 2014.

6 Алексей Малашенко, СВЕТ И ТЕНИ «МЯГКОЙ СИЛЫ», НЕЗАВИСИМАЯ ГАЗЕТА, [http://www.ng.ru/stsenarii/2013-04-23/14\\_soft\\_power.html](http://www.ng.ru/stsenarii/2013-04-23/14_soft_power.html), March 20, 2014.

7 After reviewing the Russian points about the Asia-Pacific situation and the game between China and the US, the President of the Russian Diplomatic Academy Evgeny P. Bazhanov was of the view that neither “watching in safety while others fight” nor “taking sides” is in Russia’s interest. Instead, Russia should be more active in shaping the regional structure. Е.Бажанов, “Россия в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе” «Международная жизнь» № 8 2013.

8 Программа эффективного использования на системной основе внешнеполитических факторов в целях долгосрочного развития Российской Федерации, <http://www.runewsweek.ru/>, March 21, 2014.

9 Китайские реформы: пример, вызов или угроза России? <http://cu4.narod.ru/index.files/Ekonomika/china1.htm>, March 21, 2014.